

Canine Influenza

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Canine influenza (canine flu) is a newly emerging virus that can cause a contagious respiratory infection in all dogs, regardless of breed or age. It was first isolated from ill racing greyhounds last year and has recently been associated with respiratory illness in some pet dogs in California.

What are the signs of canine influenza?

Many dogs exposed to the virus will not develop any clinical signs of illness. When dogs are ill with canine influenza, the signs are similar to a common disease known as “kennel cough.” The most common sign is a cough that persists for 10-21 days, longer than typical “kennel cough.” Affected dogs may also have a nasal discharge and a low-grade fever. A much smaller percentage of dogs develop a more severe disease with signs of pneumonia and a high fever. These dogs may require supportive care and hospitalization. If dogs receive medical attention early on, the fatality rate is very low.

Can I catch canine influenza?

No, it is extremely unlikely that people can get canine influenza from their pets. There are no known cases of canine influenza infecting humans. Kennel attendants working closely with sick dogs have not reported any respiratory illness. Public health agencies are continuing to monitor this situation closely.

Is this similar to Avian Influenza (bird flu)?

No, this virus is very different from the one causing avian influenza that has killed birds and people in Asia.

What should I do if I think my dog has canine influenza?

Contact your local veterinarian if your dog develops a persistent cough lasting more than several days or develops a thick, yellow nasal discharge. If your dog is coughing, keep it isolated from other dogs, and do not take it out to parks or areas where other dogs could get exposed.

How do I protect my dog?

Keep your dogs away from other dogs that are coughing or look ill. Wash your hands well after handling or petting any sick dog. The current “kennel cough” (*Bordetella*) vaccine does not protect against canine influenza. Veterinary researchers are currently developing a canine influenza vaccine.